

182 The Supreme Being

776 understand that the chief desire of the people is to induce Him to go away again. "Go far hence, O God, to the Sango, for Thy House is very large," is a prayer which is not seldom heard, when it is believed that He is near. An eclipse is a special visitation, and is met with wild drumming and shouting, confession of sins, and entreaties, for the consciousness of sin is by no means absent from their minds. Offerings are brought to the spirits to induce them to intercede, but no offerings are made to *Ndorombwike* Himself, for nothing can be offered that has any value for Him. "God is calling in the waterfall," "God has kindled a fire in the pool," are cries of dread alarm to this day, only in a small degree comparable to the fear that is inspired when it is declared that a spirit, of however great a man, is angry. God is an ever present terror, and the idea of communion with Him for any purpose, is one that has not entered the Konde mind. He is *Tenende*, the Owner of the world, and it is for men to see that He is not offended. Of the many sins which bring the wrath of God and the spirits on the community, the most important are widespread sexual sin, and neglect of sacrifices.

[673] And yet God is *Tata Twesa*, the Father of us all, from whom help may be expected when men deserve it. The remarkable incident of the floating of the *Domira*, referred to in Chapter I, bears its own evidence of native thinking about the Deity. "Then I said, Rejoice, for God has heard my prayers." It does not seem open to reasonable doubt that Chungu was casting himself upon unseen powers, making, in

Omens & Portents 239

of hints and tokens of the goodwill or illwill of the unseen powers, and the wise man is he who profits by them where that is possible; where it is not possible, he is the wise man who quietly awaits the event, thankful that at least the misfortune does not take him at unawares, and that, if he cannot ward off the danger, he can meet it with an equanimity impossible to one upon whom the blow falls suddenly. 787

1. Weather lore is strangely absent, perhaps because in the tropics there is a regularity about the weather which renders prognostication as unnecessary as barometers. If, on a rainy evening, the crow caws on a high note, it will be hot the next day, with a cloudless sky; if on a low note the rain will continue. Another token of rain is given when the long-necked, long-legged birds, *mwankwye*, fly in a line abreast towards the lake. 787 821

2. Of bad news there are countless indications; of good news only a very few hints have come to light. Twitching of the upper eyelid indicates good fortune of some kind undefined; but if the twitching is in the lower lid, death is near, of the person whose eye twitches, or of a friend. 787 827

3. Before the settlement of the country by the Europeans, long journeys were rarely undertaken, and omens on the way were carefully watched for, and as carefully heeded when they were given. Serpents are the most trusted mediums and great significance is attached to their movements. A serpent lying on one side of the path, and slipping into the bush on that side as the travellers approach, indicates a clear 787 825

246 Omens & Portents

787
763 fell one after another, and when Kabeta went to his fathers, he had no more trees to his credit than when he was born. The fall of the village tree, planted at the installation of the chief, shows that he in whose honour it was planted is about to go to the spirit-land.

787
821 9. The heavens give very few signs. If the full moon is red, with a red circle around it, plague is coming. If the sun "builds a house" (*nimbus*), some woman is about to give birth to twins. Worst of all, naturally, is an eclipse. "*Kyala asambwike*," they say, "God has lost patience, He is going to kill us all," and they go out with drums and wild shoutings to induce the Supreme Being to go away to the Basango.

781 What has been described in the foregoing paragraphs is called *kusura*, to foreshadow, forecast, the agent being entirely unconscious of the significance of the action. There is another class of actions which also forecast; but although the difference is not very obvious, a different word is used, *kusikura*, which sometimes means to insult, but commonly to act as a pointer to coming evil. Such actions are mostly unnatural; many of them are in themselves evil, and their occurrence is regarded as a portent.

1. Unnatural anger. Anger in a child is a phenomenon of awe. If a grown-up person arouses it—not in his own child—that person has received warning that his death is near. How this comes about is not clear. Some natives say that the anger is a sign, which cannot be explained; others that the child

789 cooked it instead. One of the reasons for killing most of his sons, as we
643 have seen, was to lessen the danger of his wives committing adultery
834 with them, for adultery was a magical cause of sickness. His wives
themselves were jealously guarded.

643 Then again a Kyungu might not wade across the river lest the act
784 of doing so should magically bring a deluge of rain from heaven, he
821 had always to be carried.

789 And the breath and the growing parts of a Kyungu's body—his
hair and nails and the constantly replaced mucus of his nose—were
643 believed to be magically connected with the fertility of the Ngonde
764 plain. When he was killed his nostrils were stopped so that he was
826 buried "with breath in his body"; while portions of his hair and nails
and of his nasal mucus were taken from him beforehand and buried
later by the nobles of Ngonde in the black mud near the river. This
action was believed to "close up the land, to keep it rich and heavy and
fertile, as it was when he himself lived in it."

789 Now the Lwembe of Lubaga had equally magical flesh, but the
622 other chiefs of Ngonde and the Nyakyusa had not. They could wade
826 across rivers, fall ill and be wounded without endangering their sub-
jects. But of all alike the breath and the hair and nails had a magical
importance. Every ruling chief in both areas had his nostrils stopped
by his great-commoners when nearing death, while portions of his hair
and nails¹ were taken from him when living and buried after his death
in a special place. The hair and nails were held to be magically
connected through their growth with the growth of crops. "You see
these nails of yours," said the man who explained the symbolism to us,
"if you cut them do they not grow again?" (They do.) "And where
does their growth come from? Does it not come from within the body?"
(It does.) "Well then that is the reason, the great-commoners take
power of growth from the chief in the form of his nails and hair."

789 Besides his magical body the Kyungu had a host of magical
782 possessions. There was the iron stool *Kisumbi* on which he was set at
his accession; once he had sat upon it he could not flee the position or
he would die. There was the drum *Mwenekelwa* whose note was
believed to be heard by the most distant of the Kyungu's subjects.
When it was beaten "all the little nobles from afar off would hear and
obey the summons; they would all come together. Then we would tell
them that so and so had not brought any ivory for a long time! Then
they would come with tusks as tribute, to pay worship to the Kyungu."
But sometimes the drum would refuse to sound and they would kill a

¹ We were only told about the nasal mucus in the case of the Kyungu.

38

COMMUNAL RITUALS OF THE NYAKYUSA

769 (82) grove. According to custom, we should kill a bull here at the same
 782 time as one is killed at Lubaga. A messenger from there finds us eating.
 796 That was the custom when the chiefs were really chiefs. Now we neglect the rituals. Mwakisisya (111) cut a ripe banana stem for us, but now the bananas are rotting in the homesteads without ripening [owing to our failure to sacrifice]. If our fathers did not sleep they sacrificed cattle, but if we do not sleep we merely offer beer.

Then Kasitile recalled the quarrel between the men of Mwaipopo (116) and those of Lubaga.

[344] Why did you insult Mwakisisya (111) saying 'What remains of your power?' When we built the Court House in Mwaipopo's country, Mwakisisya's men came to help, and some advised that a beast should be sent to Lubaga to seek blessing on the Court, but others said: 'What use is Lubaga?' . . . Mwakisisya cut a banana stem for us and said 'Seek another cow oh thou Mwakagile' (59, i.e. identifying Kasitile with the grandfather of the chief Mwaipopo whom he represented).

This, however, was an invention of Kasitile's. He continued: 'I, Kasitile, have seen a sacrifice at the grove of Mwaijonga (82) twice, at that of Mwaipopo (115) once, and at that of Mwakabule (117) once, but at Lubaga Kyala has received us frequently.' To which Mwambuputa replied: 'Yes, Kyala has helped us.'

Under pressure from Kasitile and the other priests of his chiefdom Mwaipopo did eventually provide a cow for sacrifice at the grove of his father Mwaijonga (82) but the description of that ritual is deferred to a later chapter.

771 A fundamental conception in Nyakyusa religion is that the proper working of the natural order depends upon harmony of the social order; on proper co-operation between the 'divine king' and his 'sons' the chiefs, between priests and chiefs, and between them and the whole community. If the Lwembe or a rain-maker is offended, that causes drought or flood in the area of his influence. When there is heavy rain in Selya it is said, 'There is anger at Lubaga' or 'There is anger at Lwembe's place'. Mwanjala II (78) talking of how angry he had been over an insult remarked, 'Had it been the wet season there would have been a torrent of rain.'

[578] And not only does quarrelling between chiefs and priests bring public misfortune; it reacts upon their own health. How Kasitile
 753 linked his ill-health with the quarrel between Mwakisisya (111)
 771 of Lubaga and the men of Mwaipopo (116) over the Court, and Mwaipopo's failure to provide cattle for sacrifice has just been

643 too hard to dig graves in'. They and their successors were all
 778 buried in the valley, each in a different spot. Over their graves
 [766] trees were planted and grew up to form a ring of sacred groves
 round Mbande. Each grove has a name and the Kyungu who is
 buried there is usually referred to, not by his own name, but by
 that of the grove where he lies. . . . We traced sixteen groves in
 the plain surrounding Mbande and the nobles who pointed them
 out remembered participating in celebrations at all except that
 of the last Kyungu. The ruling Kyungu and the spirits of his
 [769] dead predecessors were believed to form one divine company, the
 anger of any one of whom had terrible effects, and both living and
 dead were placated with offerings.

778 In time of drought the nobles of Ngonde would go to a diviner
 787 to inquire who it was who was angry; they would mention all the
 782 names of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn and he would
 tell them that it was so and so. They would inform the living
 • 821 Kyungu and he would give them a bull or a sheep, together with
 643 some beer—they would take one of the pots of beer from his own
 house, brought by his people as tribute. And he would give them
 some flour and cloths also. Then they would go with them into
 the grove and build a miniature hut. Next they would kill the
 beast and hang some of the meat up on a tree—the rest they
 would eat later outside the grove. Then they would tear up the
 cloths and fasten some of the pieces on to the hut in the grove—
 an action they would explain as 'giving him cloths'. And finally,
 they would pour out some of the beer and the flour. Nearly
 always, in time of drought, they would thus build a hut and make
 an offering in the grove of the Kyungu whom the diviner had
 mentioned.

643 But occasionally, if one of the chiefs had recently insulted the
 688 Kyungu, they concluded that it was the living Kyungu himself
 787 who was angry. They would go to a diviner and mention all the
 689 names of the dead Kyungus, but he would refuse to accept any
 821 of them: 'No . . . no.' And at length he would tell them that it
 was the living Kyungu who was angry because so-and-so had in-
 sulted him. Then there would be no sacrifice at the grove at all,
 but the nobles of Ngonde would go to the one who had insulted
 the Kyungu and charge him with it, asking him what he meant
 by thus killing them all, would not the whole land starve? And
 643 so the wrongdoer would take a cow to the Kyungu who, there-
 821 upon, would address the nobles of Ngonde, saying: 'If it was my

THE 'DIVINE KINGS'

43

anger which brought the drought then it will rain (for I am no longer angry). But if the rain does not come then it cannot have been my anger, it must have been someone [of the dead Kyungus] whom you forgot to ask about.' 'And if, after that, the rain came soon, then it was not likely that anyone would insult the Kyungu again.' If, however, it did not rain, then the nobles of Ngonde would approach the Kyungu once more and ask why it had not rained. He would say that he did not know, that he himself was certainly not angry, and they must have forgotten someone, they had better go and divine again. And so they would, and then the diviner would tell them that it was so-and-so (one of the dead Kyungus) and they would go and sacrifice in his grove.

Thus to insult Kyungu was not only treasonable, it was blasphemous, and the whole plain was believed to be cursed with drought or disease in reply. An 'insult' might mean any neglect of the obligations of the chiefs and nobles and commoners of the plain to their lord.

The people of Ngonde hoed large fields as tribute to the Kyungu and if they failed to do so 'he grew angry and poured all the water out of the pot in which he kept his rain stones' (*vide infra*, p. 114) and 'the sky dried up'. Then the chiefs called their men to hoc. . . . "They hoed and hoed and hoed and their wives planted, then the rain came in a torrent. . . . Kyungu created much rain."

Or if an elephant hunter neglected to send the Kyungu one of the tusks of any elephant he killed he would not kill another. 'The country beneath was angry . . . the shades of the dead Kyungus . . . they were angry saying: "Why do you stint our child?"'

The rainfall in the Ngonde plain is less than half what it is in the Nyakyusa valley and anxiety about rainfall was constantly shown in the communal rituals; elephant hunting was also a matter of concern in a way in which it was not among the Nyakyusa and this too is reflected in rituals; but there was also the preoccupation with health and fertility, as in the prayers at Lubaga. In the groves circling Mbande the nobles prayed: 'May the sterile bear children, may the cattle and fowls increase, may the children sleep and not cry at night, may the witches not injure anyone.' And as we shall see, it was health and fertility that men had in mind when they cleared out the ashes each year after the break of the rains.

Towards Christmas time, when the first maize and the first

643 replied: 'Why does he deny it? He told me once: "I have a thing
778 which kills people!"' Then, turning to the man: 'Go and fetch it
789 out into the light.' Mandala went and we heard that he brought
[754] out another medicine, not the one asked for, he brought it to the
headmen and Mwaipopo. Mwaipopo (who, being a chief, knew
inyifwila) rejected the one Mandala brought saying: 'This is
not it.' Then Mandala brought out another and again the
chief rejected it saying: 'This is not the one we want.' Then he
brought out a little bag made of bark-cloth. They sought a doctor
to clear it out. All this happened in secret; we heard of it but did
not see it. But in Court Mwaipopo turned Mandala out of his
country 'because he had admitted that he was wicked', and
Mwaipopo reminded the other chiefs in Court of a previous case
of a man in Mwangomo's country who had used this medicine.

Inyifwila is made out of a python 'as thick as a man's thigh'
which has been killed by crawling over razors. In Ngonde we
were told:

A certain snake they call *ngone* is killed in the hills to the west. They
build a hut, closed, with a man inside ringing a cow bell and razors
all over the roof. The snake comes and crawls over the roof, trying to
get in and so dies. Then the doctors come to 'close it up'. When they
have done so they cut it up for medicine—*inyifwila*; some is brought to
Kyungu direct . . . some is taken to the doctors, and it is the doctors
who give it to the chief.

[825] A similar story was told in BuNyakyusa but they got their
inyifwila from the Sangu and Hehe, to the north and east, not
from the west, and in their account the trap was baited with a
goat, not a man, and it was the blood of the python (*isota*) shed
on the surrounding grass and on the trap itself which was used for
medicine. To test the medicine the doctors gave a little to a
[787] chicken; if the chicken died the medicine was satisfactory; and
the remains of the chicken were burnt and the ashes used as
tested *inyifwila*.

[825] 'That snake is awful (*nisyafijo*), no one approaches to kill it.
No! If it were speared everyone would die.' And because the
python which is so terrible is thought to be linked with the rain-
bow it, too, is disliked. 'We fear the rainbow very much, we say
[821] it appears when a python looks up to the sky; if we are near a
river we run from it for pythons live near rivers. . . . No, we are
not mistaken, it is so.' The essential quality of the python is
ubusisya (fearfulness, majesty, dignity) and this is what is required

643 As we have seen, the chief's fearsome medicine *inyifwila* is
 778 thought to be very dangerous, and too much in the tails may cause
 622 them 'to fly about throttling men and cattle', but a chief is never
 [754] accused of working witchcraft; it is inconceivable to the Nyakyusa
 [789] that he could be. If the tails have got out of hand they are treated
 by a doctor 'to close them up'; no one suggests that the chief should
 get rid of them. It is commoners, 'black people', who are witches
 —cannibals, the eaters of raw flesh—as opposed to chiefs who,
 since the dawn of history, have killed cattle for meat and cooked
 their food like civilized men. But the distinction does not extend
 very far; junior kinsmen of the chief are 'commoners' and may
 well be accused of practising witchcraft.

[182] There was a delicate balance of power in the Nyakyusa con-
 stitution between hereditary chief and commoner headmen and
 the belief in the power of medicines and of witchcraft was an
 integral part of it. The chief provided fruitfulness by the power of
 his own body and his medicines; all men depended upon him for
 their well-being—food, cattle, children, success in war; but he in
 his turn depended upon the goodwill of his men led by their
 village headmen; without it he shivered and fell ill, only to be
 buried by them 'with the breath still in his body' lest the power of
 growth disappear with his breathless corpse.

Something of the quality of this mutual dependence and fear
 is conveyed in Kasitile's account of his own illness quoted in
 Chapter VIII.

(e) THE NECESSITY FOR HARMONY

182 The welfare of the chiefdom is thought to depend upon
 643 harmony between the chief and his village headmen and priests,
 622 and also between the chief and his kinsmen. Any friction between
 793 them may result in public misfortune as well as sickness to the
 individual at fault. The quarrel of Kasitile, the priest, first with
 [753] the Kinga priests, and then with the commoner priests of Mwal-
 [821] popo's chiefdom was believed to affect the crops and the weather,
 as well as Kasitile's own health (*vide infra*, pp. 124-41), and
 Mwaipopo's failure to tell Kasitile formally of the death of their
 [688] kinsman led to rain which spoiled the funeral dance. A quarrel
 between the lineages of two chiefs which should have sacrificed
 643 together was said to have been followed by a very poor millet
 602 crop (*vide infra*, pp. 79-80, 118, 136).
 578 How the personal relationship of a chief with his kinsmen is

SACRIFICES AT THE GROVES OF CHIEFS

79

that I can speak, that when I speak food comes tomorrow; let it be so.

Three points call for comment here. First, it will be noted that if the crops failed Kasitile had a scapegoat in his heir who was quarrelling with him. The sacrifice was performed correctly but a quarrel between any of the leading actors could destroy its efficacy, and Kasitile made it clear that he was being very forbearing with a difficult 'son'.

Secondly, a great many names were mentioned in the prayers, but they were not mentioned in any discernible order. This is obvious if the prayers are compared with the genealogy facing p. 3. And since Kasitile was a famous priest, acknowledged to be an expert in ritual and tradition we must conclude that the order was not thought important: all that was required was to mention the names of dead members of the lineage, including even one (Mwakabule 117) who was junior both to Mwaipopo and Kasitile who were sacrificing.

Thirdly, what did Kasitile imply by his reference to the moon? (p. 74). We omitted to ask Kasitile himself, but a number of informants insisted that there is no necessary connexion between the celebration of a ritual and the phases of the moon. However, rain is expected with the *waning* moon, therefore rituals which are intended to produce rain are usually performed with the waning moon, and the sacrifice to Mwaijonga in which sun and warmth were sought, was performed with the waxing moon. This may or may not be what Kasitile had in mind.

Everyone agreed afterwards that the rituals had been effective for the weather grew slightly warmer. Before the sacrifice at Lubaga on 7th July, the temperature was 62° F. at sunset, but from the 9th onward the cloud cleared, and by the 14th the sunset temperature was 68° F. Whether or not the Kinga priests living high on their mountains with a view down the Lake whence storms come are weatherwise, and time their visits carefully, we do not know. Certainly any change in the weather after a celebration is interpreted as a direct answer to prayer.

(c) SACRIFICE TO MWAKISAMBWE

A month later a sacrifice was made to Mwaijonga's great-great-grandfather Mwakisambwe (30) in the grove Mbyanga. The chief Mwaipopo was not concerned this time, but the senior line of Mwaihojo (147) and a junior line who had traditionally the responsibility of providing cows for celebrations at Mbyanga.

631
782
[721] north the Nyakyusa were continually at war; they did not trade or pray with them. Thus we conclude that participation in a common ritual is, in the Nyakyusa case, directly linked with a common origin and essential trade.

643
[789]
[782] The divine kings, Lwembe and Kyungu, were regarded as having power over certain areas, a power closely linked with rainfall. Indeed, one informant argued that the chiefs living around Masoko had never sent sacrifices to Lubaga, 'because when it rains at Lubaga the rain does not come as far as Masoko'. He was mistaken in his facts—the chiefs of Masoko did at one time send to Lubaga as Mwambete (162), chief at Masoko, himself admitted—but the argument points to a conception of supernatural power tied to a rainfall area. This notion was not, however, applied consistently.

643
173 The balance between secular and mystical power has altered during the past ten generations. The founding heroes, Lwembe and Kyungu, came as conquerors and must surely have led their men personally; but early in the history of Ngonde the Kyungu was secluded, and power was exercised almost exclusively by the nobles (*vide supra*, pp. 40-46); and the Lwembe also was, at one period, 'not seen by ordinary men' and led a life hedged about with taboos. There is sharp contrast in Nyakyusa tradition between the active chiefs who were warriors, and arbitrators, and worked hard in their fields¹ and the 'divine king' who lived in seclusion. As we have seen, the chiefs often delegated ritual functions, with the taboos involved, to a junior kinsman such as Mwamukinga (44) or Mwakihaba (45) (*vide pp.* 79-81, 114) whose heirs succeeded to the office. It is even possible that the first Lwembe at Lubaga (Mwakalebela 19) took over ritual functions from his senior brother, Kalesi (18).² The present tendency is for the development of secular power and its separation from mystical power. The Kyungu is no longer a god but an administrator: the heir of the Lwembes sits as an elected representative of chiefs on the Local Council. In the traditional Nyakyusa society ritual played an essential part in maintaining the balance between generations, sections, and social strata, and in

[178]

182
177

¹ In 1955 a young chief was bitterly criticized by his men because he 'never had a hoe in his hands' whereas his father and grandfather had (to our personal knowledge) been diligent in hoeing.

² But according to one excellent informant, Mwakisambwe (30) lived secluded while Mwakilima (31) 'fed men'—i.e. entertained.

789 drought, as in illness, a number of possible causes are discussed,
 [775] and if one possible cause is dealt with and yet the drought persists,
 [177] another will be put forward. A shrewd priest or doctor can turn
 this to account and find many reasons for the failure of his ritual,
 as the following case shows.

789 In the wet Nyakyusa valley rain-makers are not concerned
 791 only with drought, but also with flood, and, in the years 1935-8,
 with the rise in the level of the Lake which inundated many
 gardens.¹ On the Nyakyusa plain the rise was attributed to the
 ● [821] action of a Kisi doctor, Mwatabi, who had first boasted that he
 could bring up the Lake and then been commissioned by the
 chief, Mwakalukwa (141), to do so, 'because there was much grass
 by the Lake and many mosquitoes, and it was dirty there'. He
 was told to 'take the Lake up a bit, but not too far' and given a
 sheep. Then, the following season, in April (a month of torrential
 rain), Mwakalukwa's son Mwakisile (170, for Mwakalukwa
 himself had died) gave him a little bull saying,

[578] Send the Lake back, it has come too far. Then the doctor went home
 thinking to himself, 'Why does he give me such a little bull?' and he
 met a headman of the neighbouring chief, Mwakabulufu (138), and
 said, 'Why should I send the Lake back, Mwakisile has given me a
 bull only; had he given me a cow, I'd have done so, but now I am
 angry.' Then Mwakabulufu heard and sent a message to say he would
 provide a cow, since Mwakalukwa was dead. But the doctor refused:
 'No, Mwakalukwa (the son, 170) is still alive, he must give it.' The
 following September, before the usual end of the dry season, there was
 rain on the plain. It is the Kisi's rain. Mwakisile (170) refused to give
 him anything, he said he was a liar, but the commoners collected 30s.
 and a goat, and the Kisi performed a ritual just recently, and said:
 'The Lake will go back, but my strength will bring the rain; it will
 rain during the dry season this month.' We laughed very much in
 Tukuyu to hear such a prophecy, but it is raining!

The following year—after the Lake had risen again—another
 reason was given. It was said that a rain-maker at Bojo in Kisi
 country had died, and just before he died he had thrown a rain
 stone into the Lake.

(b) MAGIC OF FERTILITY

789 We did not learn very much about 'sprinkling the homesteads';

¹ There is a periodic rise and fall in the level of the Lake. In 1937 the Lake steamer
 was anchoring in what had been the roof-tree of the District Commissioner's house
 at Karonga.

MEDICINES

143

demand among police and soldiers as well as wives.) Then there are medicines used by men and women to make themselves more attractive and persuasive as lovers, litigants, leaders, clients, servants, salesmen, and so on. 278
789

Certain Nyakyusa medicines are based on observation of cause and effect. Their pharmacopia includes purges and poisons—for example, castor oil has long been cultivated and used both for making ointment and as an aperient—and some of the drugs administered, and the poulticing with hot leaves, may well be therapeutic; we have no systematic knowledge of the plants used and cannot assess them. But the scientific element is demonstrably limited, for a great many medicines are based on the principle of association, a feeling of likeness between things, and things felt to be alike are believed to react on one another, like producing like, or like things being antagonistic. 278
[789]

No distinction is made by the Nyakyusa themselves between those medicines which one trained in western science would say are based on observation of cause and effect (e.g. a purge or a poison), and those which are based on association—indeed our friends constantly cited supposed observations of cause and effect as evidence of the efficacy of all sorts of medicines and taboos. Mwakyonde used charcoal, mixed with iron from a forge, as a medicine for protection against lightning, burying a little, and powdering a little, and sprinkling it about a homestead, 'because at the forge they blow the bellows and it says, "Muli, muli, muli" (i.e. boom, boom, boom) and the lightning *jikumuleka* (booms). When we blow the bellows at a forge it makes a noise like thunder.' There was no hint that he was aware that electricity might be attracted by iron, but he insisted that where he had buried the charcoal and iron the lightning *never* struck again, and he regarded this as cause and effect. Therefore the distinction we have made between observation and association is ours, not theirs. [751]
[821]

That the symbolic element is at least as important as the practical was apparent from Lyandileko's treatment for sterility, which was famous for its success. She had three patients one morning, all women wanting to bear children. In front of her she ranged seventeen banana petals and mixed four different medicines in them. Then she chose three young banana shoots and bored a hole in each, inserting into it a length of the mid-rib of a banana leaf, slightly hollowed to form a runnel. She told an onlooker to bring the first petal full of medicine and poured it into the runnel. 842
278

^{x 797}
^{x 795}
⁷⁵⁴ her by his anger, others that the husband was to blame for rejecting medical treatment earlier on. The girl herself was reported to have said to her mother-in-law, when she was lying ill at the doctor's house: 'Are you angry with me and has your anger caused the trouble? Perhaps I did not help you in collecting firewood?' But her mother-in-law replied: 'No, I am not angry with you at all.' And the girl continued: 'I know that my father is angry. Someone might go and ask him to pray for me.' There was also tension with the husband's pagan father who had protested that his son was praying for the death of his own children when he prayed with his Pentecostal friends that God's will be done. 'The Pentecostal people say: "I like to die. I don't take any medicine . . . if someone dies or not it is all the same thing."'

^{x 797}
^{x 795} Nevertheless, it is true to say that the field in which natural causation is accepted is much wider among Christians than among pagans. It expands very slowly, but the change is evident. Even two cases of 'madness' (*ukubopa ikigili*), invariably the symptom of the wrath of the gods in pagan thought, were interpreted to us by a Christian teacher in terms of grief and shock. The first was of a young man whose wife and grandmother (who lived with him) both died very suddenly, and whose only cow was taken by other relatives and killed for the funeral feast. The loss of the cow following the loss of his wife and grandmother was held to have shattered him finally—'the lineage was finished'. The other case was of a mother, devoted to her daughter, who was distraught when the daughter went off to a distance, accompanying her husband to his place of work. For a daughter to marry beyond easy visiting distance was traditionally inconceivable.

[591]
 [574]

^{x 797}
^{x 795}
 ● 821
 132 The vagaries of the weather, attributed by the pagans to the neglect of sacrifices or quarrels between chiefs and priests, are explained in scientific terms by some Christians. Heavy rain fell around Rungwe in October 1937 and prevented people burning their rubbish heaps to fertilize their millet gardens. The pagans insisted that such early rain was unheard of and kept asking each other what could have caused it. A Christian elder assured us that the early rain was *not* very unusual in the hill country; he had seen other seasons like it. And in January of the same year the people of Mwaipopo's country were 'astonished' because no heavy rain had fallen and young maize and millet were shrivelling in the ground. They said: 'It has rained all round' and 'it seems as if we had offended Kyala'. Kasitile went to divine (*vide supra*, p. 119).

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

187

We remarked to a Christian friend, a deacon, that the rains were late. He replied: 'Well, it is not so very unusual. Sometimes rains begin in one part of the country and not in another. Sometimes we do not get heavy rain down here until the end of January.' In short, the more educated Christians are beginning to think in more general terms: they do not as yet define probabilities statistically in terms of rainfall averages, but they are tending in that direction.

And what of the positive content of Christianity? The supreme attraction, mentioned again and again as the reason for conversion, is: 'There is life' (*ubumi bulipo*), and it is life in a world to come rather than 'more abundant life' here and now that is spoken of. The contrast is between heaven above and the shadowy world 'beneath' of pagan thought, or a fearful fiery hell in which most Christians believe and to which, some think, all pagans are condemned. Constantly in sermons by Nyakyusa preachers there was stress on life, resurrection, and on the rewards and punishments of the future life, and this theme recurs again and again in the dreams of Christians.

There is a gulf also between the pagan conception of 'driving off' the shades and the heroes lest by 'brooding over' a man they bring madness and death, and the Christian ideal of union with God. Sermons stress the goodness and love of God, characteristics quite foreign to the traditional picture of Kyala.

Something of the quality of Christian thought and feeling may be grasped by an examination of the names taken at baptism—the convert from paganism always chooses a new name for himself and the meaning is more immediately obvious to everyone than it is with modern English Christian names derived, as they mostly are, from languages no longer familiar. Many of the Nyakyusa names express a very direct personal relationship with God, the Redeemer: 'He has looked upon me', 'He has roused me', 'He has waited hoping for me', 'He has died for me', 'He gives me courage', 'He has changed me', 'He has chosen me out', 'He has comforted me', and a score more of the same type. Some refer to the Gospels: 'Word of Truth', 'The Word has taken hold of me'. A few speak of purification: 'Make me white', 'He has washed me'. Some express that union with God which the pagans so greatly fear: 'We are with him', 'He has come near', 'He has brooded over me', 'Let us approach', and some thanksgiving: 'Let us sing to Him', 'We praise Him', 'We have rejoiced', and some life: 'He is risen',